

## Message Text

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62

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-04 USIA-15 PA-04 PRS-01 RSC-01 DRC-01

/045 W

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R 111036Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5497

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIBREVILLE 0712

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, GB, US

SUBJ: JUHAMMAD ALI

REF: (A) STATE 122289 (B) LIBREVILLE 0663

1. FOUR REPRESENTATIVES OF MUHAMMAD ALI ARRIVED LIBREVILLE EVENING JUNE 10 EXPLAINING THAT, AS INDICATED REFTEL A, REASON FOR ALI'S INABILITY TO COME TO LIBREVILLE WAS REFUSAL OF GOZ TO GIVE ITS CONSENT. ACCORDING TO ALI'S REPRESENTATIVES, CLAUSE IN CONTRACT WITH GOZ PRECLUDES ANY FIGHT IN AFRICA PRIOR TO BOUT IN KINSHASA AND THEY HAD INTERPRETED CLAUSE AS NOT PRECLUDING EXHIBITION BOUT. THEY URGED GOG TO CONTACT GOZ DIRECTLY TO OBTAIN GOZ CONSENT TO EXHIBITION BOUT LIBREVILLE.

2. GOG MINISTERS OF SPORT AND INFO TOLD ME (AT AIRPORT WHILE AWAITING DEPARTURE OF PRESIDENT BONGO FOR OAU MEETING) THAT THEY KNEW NOTHING OF THIS CLAUSE IN ALI'S CONTRACT WITH GOZ AND THAT INASMUCH AS ALI HAD SIGNED CONTRACT WITH GOZ IT WAS UP TO HIM TO STRAIGHTEN MATTERS OUT WITH GOZ AND NOT UP TO GOG TO DO SO. WITH ALI APPARENTLY UNABLE TO OBTAIN GOZ CONSENT AND GOG UNWILLING TO RAISE MATTER WITH GOZ, DISCUSSIONS REACHED DEADLOCK AND GOG HAS DECIDED TO REFUND TICKETS SOLD AND EXPECTS ALI TO REFUND ADVANCE GIVEN HIM.

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3. EMBASSY HAS CAREFULLY STAYED CLEAR OF ANY INVOLVEMENT AND HAS NOT BEEN BLAMED IN ANY WAY BY GOG. GOG IS, HOWEVER, PLACING BLAME SQUARELY ON ALI AND PARTICULARLY ON HIS PROMOTERS RATHER THAN ON GOZ. EMBASSY HAS, OF COURSE, NO WAY OF KNOWING WHETHER GOG WAS IN FACT INFORMED OF CLAUSE IN CONTRACT BETWEEN ALI AND GOZ PRECLUDING EARLIER FIGHT IN AFRICA, BUT GOG MINISTERS STOUTLY DENY THIS AND HAVE MADE CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT THEY WOULD NOT EVEN CONSIDER APPROACHING GOZ ON SUBJECT.

4. IT WOULD SEEM IN RETROSPECT THAT WHEN MOBUTU BELATEDLY HEARD OF SCHEDULED ALI BOUT IN LIBREVILLE HE DECIDED THAT BONGO TRYING TO STEPUP HIS THUNDER BY HAVING FIRST APPEARANCE OF ALI IN AFRICA TAKE PLACE IN LIBREVILLE AND DECIDED NOT TO PERMIT THIS. WOULD ALSO APPEAR THAT GABONESE, WHO MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN ABOUT CLAUSE IN ALI CONTRACT WITH GOZ, UNWILLING TO APPROACH GOZ IN MATTER AS IT WOULD REQUIRE INTERVENTION BY BONGO HIMSELF WITH MOBUTU IN MATTER WHICH WOULD CLEARLY IRRITATE MOBUTU AND WHICH BONGO OBVIOUSLY DID NOT RELISH RAISING. END RESULT IS THAT GOZ WILL NOT BE BLAMED OR EVEN PUBLICLY IMPLICATED, USG WILL NOT BE BLAMED IN ANY WAY BY GOG, BUT US CXAGE WILL SUFFER SOMEWHAT IN GABON AS GABONESE PUBLIC WILL BE TOLD THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAILURE OF BOUT TO TAKE PLACE IS ENTIRELY FAULT OF MUHAMMAD ALI AND HIS AMERICAN PROMOTERS.

5. DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT. MCKESSON

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